

December 3-9

First Sunday of Advent B

Church Begins at Home

An Advent Hymn for the Week

(after lighting the first candle, this hymn can be read or sung to tune of Tallis' Canon or "Praise God from whom all blessings flow")

**O Savior, rend the heavens wide;
come down, come down with mighty stride;
Unlock the gates, the doors break down;
unbar the way to heaven's crown.**

(German spiritual song, 1623)



Daily Readings

SUNDAY'S GOSPEL Mark 13:24-37

Today begins a new church year. The four-week season of Advent is a time of preparing for the coming of Christ — past (his past coming at Bethlehem), present (coming to us each day) and future (at the end of time). Advent begins by looking to this future coming. In this reading, Jesus describes his second coming as a sudden unexpected event that will bring salvation or judgment upon people caught up in the usual affairs of daily life. Therefore, he urges us to be alert and expectant.

MONDAY Isaiah 64:1-9

This section of Isaiah (chapters 56-66) was written amidst conflict that took place when Jerusalem was being rebuilt after the Exile (520-516 B.C.) The exiles were back home, but things were not going as smoothly as they expected. This lament and prayer of confession asks for God to come and make things right again.

TUESDAY Psalm 80:1-7

This psalm is a communal lament which seems to have been written about the time Jerusalem was destroyed (587 B.C.) It calls for a new appearing by God to restore the people. [Ephraim and Manasseh were sons of Joseph. When the people of Israel came to the Promised Land and divided the land among the twelve tribes, Levi, the priestly tribe, did not receive land. Joseph's tribe was split in two, Ephraim and Manasseh, in order for there to still be twelve tribes.]

WEDNESDAY Matthew 24:15-31

This passage is a parallel to Sunday's reading from Mark. The "desolating sacrilege" refers to the sacrifice of a pig (an unclean animal) on the Temple altar by a Greek ruler in 165 B.C. At the time the gospels were written, the Roman general Caligula threatened to place his statue in the Temple, which would have been considered sacrilegious.

THURSDAY Micah 2:1-13

Micah was a prophet in the Southern Kingdom of Judah in the late 8th century B.C. He preached a message of judgment to a ruling elite that was both corrupt and complacent. In this passage he condemns them for economic crimes against the poor and for rejecting his message. Verses 12-13 foretell that God will come and gather a faithful remnant.

FRIDAY 1 Thessalonians 4:1-18

This letter of Paul is the earliest New Testament writing, written about 50 A.D. At this point the Christian community was expecting Christ to return any day. Paul here gives the Thessalonians advice on how they should live while they are waiting.

SATURDAY Mark 1:1-8 (Tomorrow's Gospel reading)

John the Baptist is the main character for the Second and Third Sundays of Advent. His message is to prepare ourselves for the coming of Christ by repenting of our sins.

Blessing of the Advent Wreath

Blessed are you, O Lord our God,
ruler of the universe.

You call all nations to walk in your
light and to seek your ways of
justice and peace, for the night is
past, and the dawn of your
coming is near.

Bless us as we light the first
candle of this wreath. Rouse us
from sleep, that we may be ready
to greet our Lord when he comes
and welcome him into our hearts
and homes, for he is our light and
our salvation. Amen